

SENSITIVE

Talking Paper for the Director, DIA, for use in discussions with
Congressman Nedzi on

SUBJECT: Differences in Enemy Order of Battle in South Vietnam (U)

ISSUE: Congressman Lucien Nedzi, Chairman of the Sub-committee of
Intelligence, House Armed Services Committee, plans to call upon CIA
and DIA to review the history of Vietnam Order of Battle estimates prepared
during the late 1960s.

DIA Declassification/Release Instructions on File

BACKGROUND:

a. Testimony given at the Ellsberg trial by Mr. Samuel Adams of the
CIA introduced conflicting OB estimates prepared by the intelligence com-
munity and MACV in the 1968-1969 time period. Mr. Adams said he believed
"political pressure" within the military caused them to underestimate
the enemy. He also suggested the military figures were "falsified".
The reasons for these conflicting estimates are of interest to the sub-
committee on intelligence.

b. Differences in enemy order of battle in South Vietnam between
the different intelligence organizations have existed since the beginning
of the war. This has happened because of the differences in interpretation,
methodologies and approaches used by the preparing agencies to arrive at
their estimates.

c. During 1967, the USIB adopted SNIE 14.3-67, Capabilities of the
Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam which was published
and agreed to by all agencies on 13 November 1967. The process took
almost a year to reach agreement between the agencies and with CINCPAC
and MACV. Methodology used by Mr. Adams was different from that of
either MACV/CINCPAC or DIA and consistently resulted in higher estimates
than were fully supported in CIA. His figures were in fact more than
double the MACV figures. The final agreement approximated the position
taken by DIA. MACV estimates were somewhat lower, but they accepted
the national estimate as valid for that time period. In March 1968,
however, the results of the Adams figures were leaked to the New York
Times and the controversy was reignited.

DISCUSSION:

a. There were two major problems which caused the differences
between CIA, DIA and CINCPAC/MACV in developing the enemy strength
estimates:

(1) The enemy organizations to be included in the military
threat, and

(2) Differences between the intelligence organizations in
estimating the strengths of enemy organizations due to the methodologies
applied.

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(3) Also some confusion arose over OB using sensitive US sources and those which were used jointly by MACV and ARVN.

b. DIA/CINCPAC/MACV considered that the enemy combat forces (Main and Local forces), the administrative service forces and the guerrilla forces constituted the military threat. Other categories of VC personnel such as the Political infrastructure, self-defense forces, secret self-defense forces and assault youth were not considered part of the military threat although it was recognized that they provided manpower and civilian government services for the VC/NVA. The CIA generally agreed with this breakout of the military order of battle. However, from time to time, CIA analysts provided an aggregate of total enemy strengths including their estimates of the strengths of the other enemy organizations which caused confusion and raised questions as to the credibility of the intelligence estimates, particularly the lower military estimates. CINCPAC/MACV did not estimate the strengths of other enemy organizations. DIA provided some estimates of other organizations but agreed with MACV that these figures shouldn't be added to the military OB.

c. There were only minor differences in the accounting for the combat forces which did not significantly affect the estimates.

d. The basic difference in Administrative service forces was due to the insistence of some CIA analysts on applying a ratio of known enemy service forces supporting a few combat units to all enemy combat units and extrapolating rear service elements at COSVN headquarters, and at province and district levels based on their interpretation of a few (and rather dated) enemy documents. This methodology did not recognize strong evidence that the enemy was having difficulties in fulfilling his manpower requirements and that the number of enemy service forces varied widely by area.

e. Reporting guerrilla forces was started in 1965 by MACV and by CIA in the first quarter 1966. The differences in the figures were caused by the different methodologies used. Beginning in 1967 the MACV estimates were derived from special collection programs called RITZ and BIG MACK conducted at district level by the US Military Advisor in conjunction with his SVN counterparts. Intelligence files at districts and provinces, Military Security Service (MSS) files, National Police Files, and captured documents were examined. The only source of data used by Mr. Adams to estimate guerrilla strength was captured documents. He and his CIA colleagues would not accept the input from the MACV field intelligence officers at district level. Their interpretation of these documents which applied to a limited area would then be extrapolated to apply similar strengths to other areas which resulted in higher figures. The captured documents, for the most part, gave only an indication of what the enemy wanted to do in a specific area, but did not necessarily show that he had been able to accomplish it. After 1968, all agencies recognized that guerrilla strength had been reduced by attrition and by integrating sizable numbers of

these forces into the main and local forces to maintain combat strengths. Thus the estimates of guerrilla forces steadily dropped over the years.

f. MACV J-2 developed the original basis for determining the strength and organization of the political infrastructure. In 1967, differences between CIA and MACV estimates occurred. The higher CIA estimates included in their total typists, guards, and other low level personnel serving in a support role to the infrastructure. While MACV acknowledged the existence of these support people and their possible necessity for the internal functioning of the political apparatus, they did not consider them to be in significant leadership positions or in professional positions that would influence either the enemy's political decision making process, or his overall effectiveness in directing the insurgency in the South. They were therefore clearly in support of and outside the definition of the political infrastructure threat in SVN as interpreted by MACV. DIA and CINCPAC supported the MACV position.

g. DIA/CINCPAC/MACV believed that the categories of self-defense, secret self-defense, assault youth and other such organizations could not be estimated with any measure of confidence and that such categories, should not be carried in the military order of battle. If any estimate of the number of people providing aid to the enemy (i.e., an "insurgency support base") were feasible, it would be a far higher figure than CIA used, and even less meaningful in terms of enemy threat. Therefore, it was considered that CIA's presentation of aggregates which included these elements inflated the enemy threat.

h. The basic correctness of the lower figures (the SNIE or MACV) was demonstrated by the strength of the VC/NVA in the Tet offensive. All analysts agree that the Tet offensive was an all-out -- if not, desperate -- effort on the part of the VC/NVA. The total number of enemy forces involved in the Tet offensive attacks was estimated at around 80,000 to include up to 15,000 hastily impressed villagers. This figure which has not been contested by any intelligence agency gives the lie to the numbers that Adams believed to be the case, that is, a force of 600,000 men. As a point of fact, it makes the lowest figure (240,000) then carried by MACV appear somewhat inflated.

i. The differences in enemy strength estimates persisted through most of the war. They pitted military experience and analysis against civilian research type analysis which attempted to quantify categories of people on which there was a paucity of information. Noticeably there were few differences on the combat forces where frequent fighting yielded prisoners and other information. The greatest differences were on the nebulous and often questionable civilian organizations. These quarrels served only to raise doubts about the credibility of intelligence.

RECOMMENDATION: That this paper be used in discussion with Congressman Nedzi.

SECRET

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COMPARATIVE ENEMY STRENGTH ESTIMATES -1967*

<u>CATEGORIES</u>	<u>REVISED CIA POSITION FOR NIE</u>	<u>MACV POSITION</u>	<u>AGREED POSITION</u>
Main and Local Forces	121,000	119,000	119,000
Administrative Services	40-60,000	29,000	35-40,000
Guerrillas	60-100,000	65,000	70-90,000
Political Infrastructure	90,000	85,000	75-85,000
Self-Defense Force	100,000	Excluded	No Estimate
Secret Self-Defense Force	20,000	Excluded	No Estimate
Assault Youth	Several Thousands	Excluded	No Estimate
TOTALS	No Aggregate	298,000	No Aggregate

* For illustrative purposes only. This data represents positions of CIA (revised) and MACV prior to adopting an agreed position estimate for 1 October 1967.

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